

gobar times

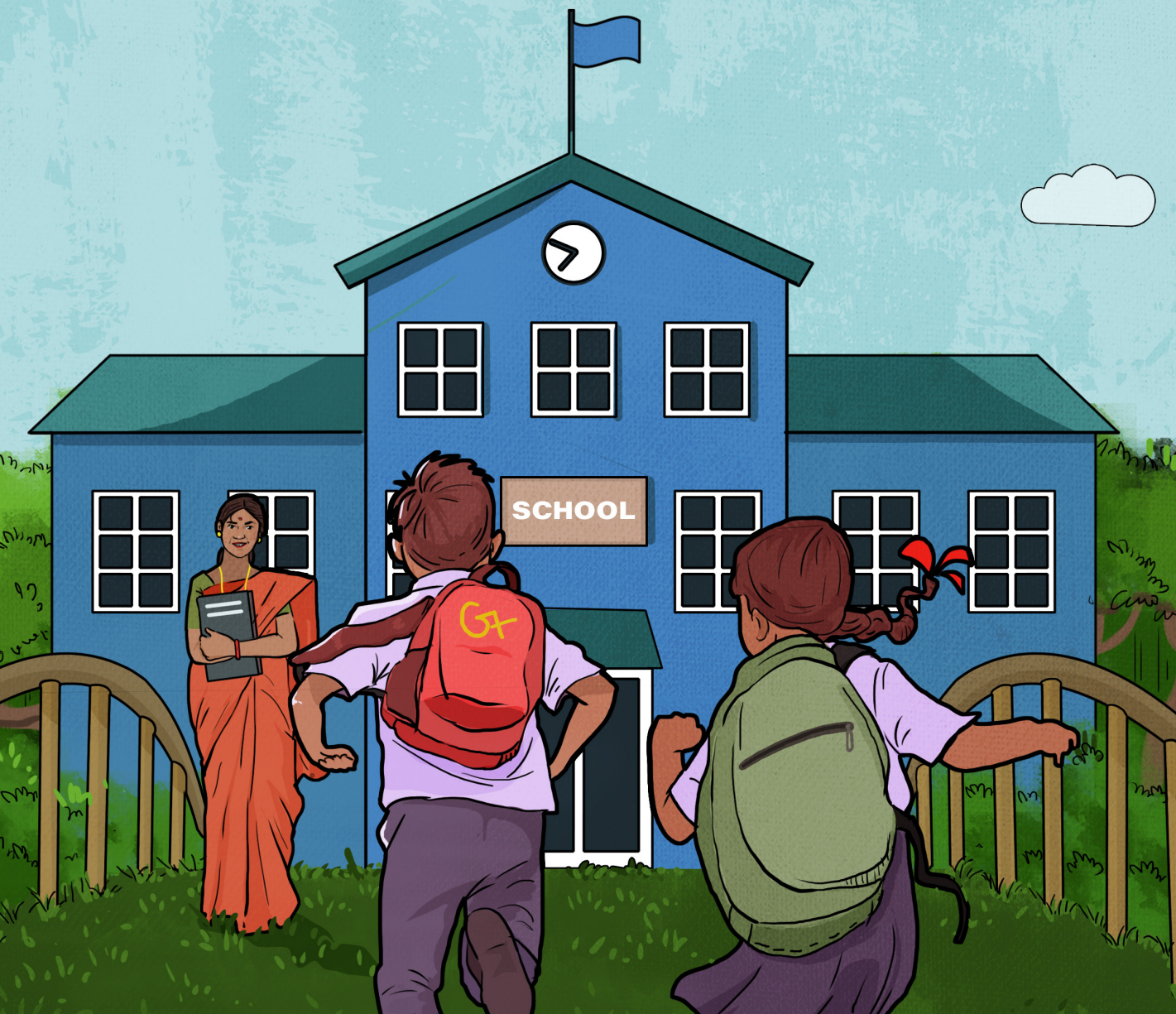
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A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS

SCHOOL SWAG

FULL-ON GREEN VIBES!

Dive into green goodness by celebrating the inspiring initiatives of some eco-champ teachers and schools



BIODIVERSITY

Education with a Difference



Tarsem Kumari

In a unique initiative that blends hands-on learning with practical skill development and employability, the Government High School at Anji is training its students to identify and use wild edible plants

Nestled amidst the serene landscape of Anji in Himachal's Solan district, a government high school stands as a beacon of education and empowerment for its students. In 2023, an innovative initiative has taken root within its grounds, one that not only enriches the curriculum but also cultivates valuable employability skills among its students. This

initiative revolves around the identification and utilisation of wild edible plants that are abundant in the region, offering a unique blend of hands-on learning and practical skill development.

Anji, blessed with a diverse ecosystem, boasts a rich variety of wild edible plants scattered across its verdant hills and valleys. From succulent berries to nutritious greens and flavourful herbs,

these natural treasures have sustained local communities for generations. However, despite their abundance, many of these plants have remained overlooked and underappreciated, especially in formal education.

Recognising the potential of these wild edible plants to enrich both education and livelihoods, Government High School, Anji, embarked on a journey to integrate them into its curriculum. Through hands-on workshops, nature walks and interactive sessions, students are introduced to the local flora and guided in the identification, harvesting, and preparation of edible plants. This experiential learning approach not only deepens their understanding of biodiversity, but also equips them with practical skills that hold immense value in the job market.





Cultivating employability skills

The identification of wild edible plants at the School serves as a catalyst for the development of a wide range of employability skills among its students. Firstly, it nurtures their observation and research abilities, honing their capacity to identify and differentiate between various plant species—an essential skill in fields such as botany, agriculture, and environmental science. Moreover, it instills a sense of resourcefulness and adaptability, as students learn to harness the natural resources available to them sustainably.

Fostering entrepreneurship and innovation

Beyond traditional employment avenues, the knowledge and skills acquired through this initiative also pave the way for entrepreneurial ventures and innovative endeavours. Armed with an intimate understanding of their natural surroundings, students are empowered to explore alternative livelihood options, such as agro-tourism, organic farming, and eco-friendly product development. Moreover, the entrepreneurial spirit cultivated through this initiative encourages students to think creatively and problem-solve effectively,



qualities highly prized in today's dynamic job market.

Encouraging a growth-oriented mind-set

Previously, wild edible plants were ignored and seen as a nuisance due to a lack of knowledge and awareness. This led to fields and forests being cleared, causing a loss of valuable food and medicinal resources, and increasing reliance on less sustainable and nutritious options. The school's initiative has helped change this perception.

Boosting confidence and curiosity

Finally, the mastery of identifying and using wild edible plants boosts the students' confidence and curiosity. The ability to recognise and utilise resources from their natural surroundings is empowering, fostering a sense of accomplishment and curiosity to learn more about the world around them. This newfound

confidence often translates into other areas of their education and personal lives, encouraging a lifelong love of learning and exploration.

The identification of wild edible plants at Government High School, Anji, represents a paradigm shift in education—one that transcends traditional boundaries and embraces the wealth of knowledge embedded within nature. By integrating hands-on learning with practical skill development, the school not only enriches the educational experience of its students but also equips them with invaluable tools for future success. As Anji's students embark on their journey into the world beyond the classroom, they carry with them not only a deep appreciation for their natural surroundings but also the confidence and skills to thrive in an ever-changing job market.

The author is a TGT Medical teacher in the Government High School, Anji, Solan district, Himachal Pradesh.



Souparno Banerjee

Himachal's Top-5 Rolling in Wins!

Five of Himachal's 'greenest' schools win Chief Minister's GSP Rolling Trophy for 2023-24. Three of these five schools are from Solan, which was adjudged the best performing district. This trophy is awarded annually to the 'greenest' schools in the state, based on rankings done by Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) Green Schools Programme (GSP).



The awards are given every year by CSE – one of South Asia's leading environmental research bodies – in association with HIMCOSTE. The two organisations have been working together for almost a decade for furthering environment education in the state.

CSE's Green Schools Programme is an innovative initiative that encourages schools and their students and teachers to audit the environmental practices within their campuses, and strive to improve on them.

The winning schools

◆ **Government Senior Secondary School, Bhatian** in Solan has been honoured with The Changemaker School Award in the Yellow to Green category. This recognition highlights the school's commitment to environmental improvement and serves as an inspiration for educational institutions throughout the state.

◆ **Government Senior Secondary School, Bhont** in Shimla has received the GSP Best Newcomer Award for its outstanding practices across the GSP Audit sections, demonstrating its potential as a leader in regional sustainable development.

◆ **Pinegrove School, Dharampur** in Solan has been awarded the GSP Waste Warrior Award for its exceptional waste management practices, setting a benchmark for other schools to follow.

◆ **Government Senior Secondary School, Didwin** in Hamirpur earned the GSP Land Manager Award for its notable efforts in land conservation and management, showcasing its commitment to sustainable land use.



A few weeks back, on World Environment Day, five schools from Himachal Pradesh have been awarded the 2023-24 Chief Minister's Rolling Trophies for their 'green' initiatives. These trophies are given away every year by New Delhi-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) Green Schools Programme (GSP), and are presented at a ceremony organised by Himachal Pradesh Council for Science Technology and Environment (HIMCOSTE).

With schools in Solan consistently practising environment-friendly measures over the last few years, the district was adjudged the **best district in the state**. Three out of the five award-winning schools are from Solan.

Prabodh Saxena, Chief Secretary, Government of Himachal Pradesh, gave away the awards.





◆ **M.B.S.S.S., Nalagarh** in Solan was recognised with the GSP Solar 30 Energy Manager Award for its initiatives in harnessing solar energy and promoting renewable solutions, underlining its role as a pioneer in sustainable energy and carbon emission reduction.

Says Neeraj Kumar, Programme Manager, Environment Education, CSE: "Himachal Pradesh has been participating in the Green Schools Programme for 13 years, and we now have more than 800 schools from the state involved in our environment education programme. In 2023-24, 94 schools from the state completed our GSP audit, marking the second highest number from any state in the country. All the winning schools serve as exemplary models for other schools in the state."

The GSP-CM's Rolling Trophy was instituted in 2017 to recognise schools which participated in the GSP audit, with the aim of encouraging

students to become environmental managers and instil values and conscience towards bettering the environment.

What it means to be a Green School?

A green school may include, but is not limited to, the following.

- ◆ A window to floor ratio (WFR) of more than 5 per cent.
- ◆ Majority of the population using sustainable and non-polluting modes of transport (public transport, e-rickshaws, cycling, walking, etc).
- ◆ Maximum use of energy-efficient lighting to conserve energy and use of alternative sources of energy – the GSP Audit encourages schools to minimise the use of conventional lights without compromising over sufficient lighting for students.
- ◆ Maintain a high green cover inside and around the school campus along with greater biodiversity by planting native species of plants.
- ◆ Serve only cooked meals (avoid packaged foods) to ensure healthy food consumption.
- ◆ Harvest rainwater and treat wastewater.
- ◆ Segregate waste at source efficiently and dispose of responsibly – recycling of at least 90 per cent of the waste is recommended.
- ◆ Wet waste composted; waste should not be burned.

For more on the event and the programme, please contact **Neeraj Kumar: 9716281849**, neeraj.kumar@cseindia.org

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SABJA SHERBET

A yummy drink of sabja and honey for believers of healthy living and wise thinking.

Sabja are seeds of the basil plant, a close relative of the tulsi plant found in Indian homes. In recent years, the seeds have become very popular among people looking to eat healthy. The small black seeds, also called *falooda* seeds, become mucilaginous (gain a gelatinous consistency) when soaked in water and are said to help reduce weight, constipation and acidity, and also manage diabetes. As the hydrated seeds do not have a strong flavour or taste, they can be easily added to smoothies, fruit juices and milkshakes for a healthier kick. Non-hydrated seeds are also used in idli batter to make it healthier for diabetics.

Around 150 species of the genus *Ocimum* are present around the world and many of them have mucilaginous seeds. However, only seeds of *Ocimum basilicum* (babui tulsi or sweet basil) is sold in market as it has a higher number of seeds per plant.

You can prepare a healthy beverage using these seeds. Using honey instead of sugar makes it even better. The globally accepted definition of honey by the Food and Agriculture Organization is: "(it) is the natural sweet substance produced by honeybees from the nectar of plants or from the secretions of living parts of the plants or excretions of plant sucking insects on the living parts of the plants, that bees collect, transform by combining with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store and leave in the honeycomb to ripen and mature". Honey is a natural preservative and sweetener and is used as



Vibha Varshney

a medicine in Ayurveda. It is used to treat cough, phlegm, hiccups, obesity, worm infestation, vomiting, asthma, diarrhoea and also for healing wounds. Honey should not be heated or consumed warm.

Now, let's try our hand at a delicious recipe of honey with sabja seeds.

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PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

TO SERVE: 2 persons

INGREDIENTS:

1. Honey: 3 tsp
2. Sabja seeds: 1 tsp
3. Milk: 2 cups
4. Cardamom powder: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp

PROCEDURE:

1. Soak the sabja seeds in a little water.
2. Take ice cold milk and add the seeds, honey, and cardamom powder to it. Then, mix well.

Your sabja sherbet is now ready! Gulp down this tasty drink with your friends and family, and bask under the sweet compliments you'd receive for your healthy choice.

BOOK REVIEW

ANDAMAN ADVENTURE— BARREN ISLAND

Deepak Dalal's latest from *Andaman Adventure* series uncovers and solves mysteries on Barren Island amidst thrilling twists and volcanic wonders.



Dakshiani Palicha

With an idea to introduce a unique island that has something not seen anywhere else in India—an active volcano—children's author Deepak Dalal continues his *Andaman Adventure* series with *Barren Island*. The book takes teenaged adventurers Vikram and Aditya, protagonists of several Dalal books, to Barren Island in the Andaman as they attempt to find answers to questions raised in the first book of this series, [Andaman Adventure—The Jarawa](#). In this first book, Vikram, Aditya and their friend Chitra cross the deep forests and waterbodies of the Andaman to escape some troublemaking characters. In *Barren Island*, the three characters have a different agenda; they want to find the bad guys and help bring a stop to their plot. The focus in this book is on solving the mystery rather than introducing the readers to the natural environment of the Andaman. This is a clever way of avoiding a monotonous tone through the series as the story comes to a conclusion.

The story thus continues like any good mystery for young readers, with several twists and turns that almost make you want to join our heroes and find the next clue with them. The fact that several answers are only given in the epilogue suffices to keep you engaged until the very last page.

This does not mean that the book doesn't take advantage of its unique setting. Dalal does try, like in the first book, to provide access to a place that is otherwise hard to access. In the first book, he gives a glimpse of the Jarawa people, an elusive tribe of the Andaman that prefers to stay away from so-called modern civilisation. Here, he takes us to Barren Island, a landscape that may prove too closed off to visit even if you were to go to the Andaman. He also tries to explain volcanism in as simple a way as possible, keeping the focus on the characters and the plot rather than on the fascinating yet complex science.

The climax of the book is when chaos ensues. Without revealing too many details, it is safe to

say that the story comes to an end with a bang as various characters act at once to save themselves and others from their nemesis—and from a dangerous volcanic eruption that would wipe them away without a trace.

In the end, Vikram, Aditya and Chitra are left with unforgettable memories of the Andaman, and the reader is left with an earnest desire to visit the islands at least once.

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Gobar Ratings



KALKI SOCHO

In 2019, the National Clean Air Programme aimed to reduce particulate pollution—PM2.5 and PM10—by 20-30 per cent by 2024, later raised to 40 per cent by 2026.

However, most cities lag behind the 2024 goal despite spending thousands of crores, with only eight meeting the target, 22 worsening, and many not even recording continuous data. With high standards on paper but poor implementation in reality, an epic battle against air pollution looms ahead.